

Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

DCS Communications Office

December 30, 2004

(This week's Weekly Wrap Up is being sent on Thursday, Dec. 30, because of the New Year's holiday.)

The Week Ahead

Wed., Jan. 5 –The Commissioner meets with Mayor Bill Purcell to discuss the Caring for Children program.

Thu., Jan. 6-Fri., Jan. 7 – The Commissioner attends the Strengthening Data Use and Analysis in Class Action Litigation Conference in Chicago, Ill.

Goal Setting

Submitted by Thomas H. Riche, Deputy Commissioner for Training & Administration

Welcome to 2005.

January marks the time of year we all resolve to do the things we didn't do during the previous year. We resolve to lose that extra 10 pounds, to stop smoking, to be a better case manager and much more. We set long-term and short-term goals. We identify where we want to be 10 or 20 years from now.

The only problem with making a New Year's resolution or even setting a goal is that many of us just don't stick to it. Even when we have the best of intentions, we often fail to prepare an action plan. In other words, we identify the things we need to do, but we have no idea how we're going to do it. Goals are meaningless without a plan, and plans are meaningless without the appropriate action. We achieve what we achieve as the result of having followed a plan. Unfortunately, many people fail, not for lack of ability or intelligence or even courage, but simply because, year after year, they set the same goals, but never reach them because they have never planned the activities to take them from where they are to where they want to be.

It is a practical program of goal setting with a solid plan that can move you from a dream to reality, from wish to fulfillment, from conception to consummation. Goal setting, along with planning, gives concreteness to thoughts and translates thought into action. It establishes a relationship between where you are and where you are going. Few people have a goals program because they simply do not know where to begin. They have no

idea of where they stand now. They have no clearly stated priorities and can't determine where they want to go. Having clearly defined goals and a plan of action will help you discover where you stand now and provide a basis for determining where you want to go. You will gradually focus on the destination you want to reach and identify the exact direction to take. You will begin to develop a feeling for your specific needs and for concrete goals that will result in the fulfillment of those needs.

According to Zig Ziglar, 'The power of goal-setting is that setting concrete goals enables you to go beyond first base. It's one thing to want something to happen, but quite another to actually set a goal to make it happen and work toward that goal in a conscious, dedicated manner. Most people agree that goals are important ... but most stop there, never taking action toward those goals. Until you clearly list your goals and have a written plan attached to them, you aren't a goal setter or a goal achiever – yet.'

There are literally hundreds of how-to books, tapes, seminars and workshops that discuss goal setting and goal achievement. They all have one central theme – that setting a goal without a plan and a deadline is no more than a wish.

Although I have facilitated many workshops on goal setting, I can't even scratch the surface in this short article. However, my intent is to help you start thinking about how a practical program of goal setting can help you achieve a certain level of success in the six major areas of your life:

- Physical & Health
- Mental & Educational
- Family & Home
- Spiritual & Ethical
- Social & Cultural
- Financial & Career

Many of the books I've read use all or at least a combination of these major life areas. Paul J. Meyer draws a wheel (**Wheel of Life**) and uses these six areas as the spokes on the wheel. He asks participants to rate themselves 1-10 in each area of life. In any area with a low rating, he has the participants set a goal that will take them where they want to be in that part of their life. For example, stopping smoking and losing 10 pounds would be goals one could set in the Physical & Health area. Joining Toastmasters, Lyons Club, or your local Bingo night to become more sociable, could be a goal set in the Social & Cultural area. To be the best case manager or DCS attorney you can be, belongs in the Financial & Career area. You get the picture. Once you break your goals down and identify them in certain areas, it makes them much easier to accomplish.

Most goal-setting experts will teach you how to make your goals S.M.A.R.T.

The S stands for specific. Goals should be very specific. It is not enough to say, "I want to lose weight." But rather, "I will lose 15 pounds by April 1, 2004."

The M stands for measurable. Not every goal is measurable. For example, you can't specifically measure how much your attitude has improved if you set a goal to have a better attitude. However, if your goal is become a better case manager or a better attorney, you can measure that through self-study, feedback from clients and your superiors, and observations from others.

The A and R go hand in hand. The A stands for Attainable and the R stands for Realistic. Although these two are fairly obvious, there are some things we just can't do. As good as Shaq is with a basketball, he would be a complete failure as a jockey riding "Seabiscuit" in the Kentucky derby.

The T stands for timely. In order to reach a goal, you must set a deadline for its accomplishment.

Finally, plan to reward yourself when you accomplish a goal. Include the advantages to be gained and the losses to be avoided. These are the compelling reasons you have for taking action to achieve your goal. Be thorough in the listing of expected rewards. When you know the benefits that will be yours, you have the courage and desire necessary to push ahead, to do the work and to overcome every roadblock.

A New Year, a New TNKids

Submitted by the Office of Communications

The New Year is upon us. And this time of the year brings with it some exciting changes for the Department, like the TNKids 01-05 release.

The 01-05 upgrade is a refreshed, refurbished version of the TNKids application, and contains new features and updates to make the system more user-friendly and tech-savvy. Three major components of the 01-05 release include the addition of extensive Termination of Parental Rights Information, Restricted Access Adoption Information, changes to Case Recordings and even the incorporation of spell check.

The 01-05 TNKids release will be implemented on January 17, and all employees who have access to and/or use TNKids are required to complete training on these updates, which began in December and continues through January 14. Employees who must attend this mandatory training include social services custody case managers, legal staff, including support staff, and all other TNKids users.

For social services custody case managers, as it relates to the One Child-One Worker model concerning adoption information in TNKids, training will be delivered in two different formats. For region-identified staff, classroom training will be provided in the five TNKids computer labs. This training will be a half-day long and will include the case recordings changes. Region identified staff should include those using TNKids less than one year and those who continue to struggle with the use of the TNKids system. Team Coordinators and Team Leaders will identify those that will need the classroom training. These identified staff members need to register for the classroom Custody Case Manager

training during one of the sessions listed below by contacting their regional training coordinator.

Morning sessions are from 8:30-11:30 a.m. and afternoon sessions are from 1-4 p.m. All times are CST.

Knoxville:

Jan. 6 – Morning /Afternoon

Jan. 7 – Morning/Afternoon

Nashville:

Jan. 4 – Morning/Afternoon

Jan. 7 – Morning/Afternoon

Jan. 12 – Morning/Afternoon

Tallahoma:

Jan. 10 – Morning/Afternoon

Jan. 11 – Morning/Afternoon

Jackson:

Jan. 4 – Morning/Afternoon

Jan. 5 – Morning/Afternoon

Memphis:

Jan. 6 – Morning/Afternoon

Jan. 7 – Morning/Afternoon

The other social services custody case managers will receive training of the same material via satellite delivery. They will gather in classrooms or assembly halls at one of the 12 university/college consortium sites. This training will occur for 8-11 a.m. CST on Jan. 11-14.

The sites include ETSU, UT Knoxville, Lincoln Memorial, Southern Adventist, TSU, Belmont, Austin Peay, MTSU, UT Martin, Freed-Hardeman, Union and Univ. of Memphis. These staff members will also contact their regional training coordinator for registration.

All legal staff, including support staff, will be required to attend a full day (8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. local time) of classroom training at one of the five TNKids computer labs (Memphis, Jackson, Nashville, Tallahoma or Knoxville). The schedule of remaining classes follows:

Jan. 10 – Memphis

Jan. 11 – Memphis

Jan. 12 – Jackson

Jan. 13 – Jackson and Nashville

Please contact Bettye Carter by DCS Groupwise to register for these classes.

For ALL other TNKids users (those not attending one of the sessions listed above), a two-hour presentation of the changes to case recordings will be delivered via satellite delivery to all of the consortium sites statewide. **All TNKids users**, with the exception of legal staff and social services custody case managers, **must attend** one of these classes. There will be eight sessions:

Jan. 7 from 8:30-10:30 a.m. and 1-3 p.m.
Jan. 10 from 8:30-10:30 a.m. and 1-3 p.m.
Jan. 11 from 1-3 p.m.
Jan. 12 from 1-3 p.m.
Jan. 13 from 1-3 p.m.
Jan. 14 from 1-3 p.m.

All times listed are CST.

What Is SACWIS and Why Does It Matter?

Submitted by Michael Price, Executive Director, Office of Information Systems

One of the top priorities for the Office of Information Systems (OIS) is to develop a system that is SACWIS compliant. In the state of Tennessee, this system is called TNKids. There are 90 requirements/guidelines that must be met before a state is considered to be compliant. Over the last 10 years, Tennessee has received millions of dollars in federal funding to implement a fully compliant SACWIS system. Failure to complete this project would require the state to repay the majority of the federal funds received.

The genesis of Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS) sprang from Title XIII, Section 13713, Enhanced Match for Automated Data Systems, of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1993. This legislation provided states with the opportunity to obtain 75 percent enhanced funding through the Title IV-E program of the Social Security Act to plan, design, develop and implement a SACWIS. Additionally, the legislation provided an enhanced SACWIS cost allocation to states so that Title IV-E would absorb all SACWIS costs for foster and adopted children, without regard to their Title IV-E eligibility.

SACWIS was, and still is, a comprehensive automated case management tool that supports social workers' foster care and adoptions assistance case management practice. It is not a tracking system, although it provides tracking functionality. Additionally, states were encouraged to add complementary functionality to their SACWIS (referred to as optional requirements), such as functionality that supports child protective and family preservation services, thereby providing a unified automated tool to support most, if not all, child welfare services. In addition, states have the option of incorporating other programs into a SACWIS, such as TANF emergency assistance, juvenile justice and child care. By law, a SACWIS is required to support the reporting of data to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).

Currently, most states are at some stage of SACWIS planning, development, implementation or operations. To date, the total SACWIS project costs currently exceed \$2 billion for the nation. Consequently, the federal government is monitoring and evaluating the progress of states with regards to SACWIS with great care.

The state of Tennessee completed a SACWIS technical assistance review earlier this month at the request of the executive director of the Office of Information Systems. The purpose of the visit was to evaluate our level of SACWIS compliance and to identify the areas we are lacking. We expect an official report next month. This report will serve as our base line, and marks the first major step in creating a comprehensive plan to meet all the SACWIS requirements.

SACWIS at a glance from the federal Web site

Some common issues every state faces include the following:

- Automation of Title IV-E eligibility determination
- Financial components (missing; not working properly)
- Paper processes
- Redundant data entry
- Working off-line
- Ticklers, alerts, and notifications ineffective or non-existent
- SACWIS used incompletely and inconsistently throughout a state due to local preferences and business practices

Compliance concerns include the following:

- Use of external automated systems to support child welfare-related business processes and practices.

Following are compliance requirements 8-14, which provide a more detailed look at some of the specific issues to be addressed for SACWIS.

Requirement 8: Assign case to worker.

- Intakes must be assigned to the appropriate worker, either directly to the worker or through a supervisor following system- enforced State business processes
- There must be system-enforced case/client assignment to staff and/or their supervisors at all times.
- There can never be case orphans. A case must always be explicitly assigned to someone.

Requirement 9: Refer for investigation and/or services, as appropriate.

- The system needs to present all appropriate issues and services in a clear and organized manner.
- The system needs to allow for the case to be sent forward to the next “ stage” in the business process.

Requirement 10 (optional, but related to Requirement 9): Collect and record investigation information.

The system needs to capture and clearly present investigation data that the worker needs to make informed decisions.

Requirement 11: Record investigation decision.

- The system needs to capture the complete investigation decision.
- Children, allegations and findings should be linked together. All aspects should be linked.
- Discrete dispositional data values are preferred to and more useful than text narrative (e.g., substantiated, unsubstantiated).

Requirement 12: Generate alerts, ticklers, notifications and reports.

- The system should automatically generate alerts, ticklers, notifications and reports.
- All reports, forms, and notices needed by workers, their supervisors, or management should be SACWIS generated.
- This includes e-mail notifications.

Alerts/ticklers, notifications, and reports:

Tickler: An automated reminder to a worker and/or supervisor that an action is required.

Alert: Client- or case-based note to warn or inform anyone who has contact with the client/case. (The terms alert and tickler are sometimes used interchangeably.)

Notification: Can refer to system-generated correspondence, task lists, reports or word processing templates that are integrated into the SACWIS.

Requirement 13: Determine and record risk assessment

- System must support all professional risk assessments.
- The system should present a view of the investigation findings and client situation such that the caseworker has all necessary information to perform a risk assessment.
- The system should provide a history of previous assessments and allow the addition of new assessments.

Requirement 14 (optional): Perform risk assessment

- The system should provide an automated risk assessment, which evaluates the assessment data and scores the child/family on a scale of risk.

- The system should allow the worker to acknowledge the system-generated risk assessment, but override it by documenting and recording the worker's own risk assessment. (Based on requirement 13, this is not fully optional.)

We will review other requirements in the weeks to come.

Core Leadership

There was no Core Leadership meeting this week.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Submitted by Daryl Chansuthus, Director, Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement

If we are to succeed in our mission to improve outcomes for families and children, then we must provide our front-line staff with quality supervision. Supervision excellence demands not only a thorough understanding of staff roles and responsibilities, but also the ability and the interest to learn what the supervision needs of staff are and how those needs can be supported. The following list provides a few guidelines for achieving supervision excellence. How many of these guidelines do you practice?

Interact with your team and others; do not stay put in your office. “Hang out” with people. Check in with them often. Earn respect and treat others with empathy and respect. Everyone needs to feel nurtured, understood and heard. Understand what is important to everyone on your team and what their needs are — not always just at work. Be a cheerleader! Let your staff know that you believe in them by what you do—not just by what you say.

Build teams by encouraging people to ride around together and take lunches or breaks together. Be a good mediator. Learn patience when listening to contrasting opinions. Listen to everyone's needs and be careful not to take sides. Look for what people in conflict have in common and work from there.

Be a role model for others and don't be afraid to jump in and get in the mix. Allow workers time and space to practice their skills. Always provide feedback, especially positive feedback. Tell workers when they're doing good work.

Be okay with not having all the answers. Learn to rely on your resources: administrators, regional liaisons, CQI coordinators, other supervisors, community partners and your team members.

Be a good liaison between front-line staff and administration. Make sure you fully understand what administration is asking/expecting of front-line staff and what the

benefits are before you share these expectations with staff. In turn, help administration understand what realistically can be done and what is possible from your point-of-view as a front-line supervisor.

Be innovative! Dare to think! Dare to find solutions! Dare to act in ways that will improve outcomes for children and families!

Ask workers what their long-term view is. Help them set goals and give them opportunities to succeed. Share what you're learning. Encourage others to continue to learn and grow.

An Adoption Poem

12/27/04

Adoption

Some people think adoption is cruel
But I think it is pretty cool
After all I was a part of it
But because of my mom's love sometimes I feel I wasn't
My mom and I have been through the good and bad
And the happy and sad
But when you look at it the good outweighs the bad
And happy always outweighs the sad

If you get the option
I think you should chose the love and joy of adoption
I chose it because I knew there was no way in the world I wouldn't
I don't think there is a way that I couldn't
People there were my sister and brothers
And of course my lovely mother

The judge says some stuff and then when she was finished at last
I remember the big question she asked
"Do you want this to be your family"
There was no wedding but I said, "I do"
So I am glad you are choosing adoption too



Justin Ryan Cinque Lane

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Cinque Lane". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops and is positioned below the printed name.

